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NOV 3 1934
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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HOUSEKEEPERS' CLIMAT

Saturday, November 3, 1934.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "News Items." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering and the Forest Service, U.S.D.A.

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Here's Saturday again -- our day for talking over some of the odds and ends of news of the week from the various Bureaus of the Department of Agriculture at Washington, D. C.

The Department has just issued a brand-new bulletin on farmhouse plans. In it are sketches and floor plans of 40 different houses, each one planned for farm needs. For example, there are plans for one-story "growing houses" of two or three rooms -- houses that can be built onto easily. So if farm families want to build a new home little by little as they see their way clear to do it, these "growing house" plans will give them helpful ideas. They'll also find plans for the moderate-sized one-story house or the larger home of more than one story, or the very small house. And they'll find house plans suitable for different sections of the country, some planned for New England farms, others for ranches on the Pacific Coast, special plans for the North or the South, the Middle West, the Southwest or the Southeast. Some of the house plans allow for cellars, some don't. Some provide heater rooms or heater space in the house proper. Even the roofs differ to suit the climate and other conditions in the various regions; some roofs are flat, some hip, some low-pitched, others high-pitched. You'll even find in that bulletin plans for log cabins to suit tenant farmers.

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Comfort and convenience for the whole/family and a minimum of steps for the housewife -- these are characteristics of every one of these forty house plans. Mr. Ashby, the author of the bulletin, has made a point of well-placed entrances, for example, and ample closet space, and kitchens that are handy, attractive and well-equipped with sinks, workshelves, cabinets and so on.

Perhaps you'll remember that last spring the Bureaus of Home Economics and Agricultural Engineering, along with the agricultural colleges of 46 states, made a Farm Housing Survey using CWA funds. The new bulletin of farmhouse plans is one of the results of that survey.

Sixteen of the colleges have contributed plans to be included in the bulletin. The bulletin simply gives the sketches and floor plans. The working drawings with all necessary dimensions and details for building must be obtained from the extension services of the State Agricultural Colleges. The State services handle this type of information because construction details vary with the climate, naturally.

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Farm families who are thinking of building soon will probably find interest and profit in examining the sketches and floor plans contained in the bulletin. It won't be so helpful to city families, for the homes are designed for farm houses. Farm families interested should write to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., asking for a copy of the new farmhouse plans bulletin.

The latest news from the Forest Service is that work has actually started on the great shelterbelt of trees we've been hearing so much about during the last few months. The Emergency Relief has allotted a million dollars for making detailed surveys of the location, soil, tree types and other factors preliminary to planting the 1000-mile belt of trees on the Great Plains. When the foresters have finished their exploratory work, made plans and developed methods, the work will continue on such a scale as Congress may decide. The general location of the shelterbelt will be within what the experts call the "20-to-25-inch rainfall strip" extending from northern North Dakota to western Texas, and at elevation of 1500 to 2000 feet above sealevel. Foresters are working to establish its exact location. Others are studying the kinds of trees that can survive the rigorous climate of the Great Plains. One group is making a survey of social and economic condition in the shelterbelt region to find out how the belt will affect agriculture, local industry and employment. Other groups are out getting supplies of tree seed, leasing nursery sites, and arranging for purchasing suitable trees.

This plan for establishing a great belt of trees across the drought-stricken Great Plains is not the first attempt to modify climatic and agricultural conditions by tree planting, the Forest Service tells us.

One of the most famous large-scale tree-planting projects began more than 60 years ago on the steppes of Southern Russia where conditions are in many ways like these of our prairie regions. The Russians planted protection forest strips over thousands of acres as a defense against the "black dust storms" which the heavy winds carried over the plains. Studies show that the forest belts reduced the average wind velocity between the strips by 35 per cent in summer and about 20 per cent in winter. Evaporation of moisture between the strips is 30 percent less than in the open prairie areas, and yields of grain in a typical dry year were more than a quarter ton per acre greater than in the open prairie.

The Landes region of France is another striking example of the conquest of man over unfriendly forces of nature. Forest planting in this region has reclaimed thousands of acres of waste land and has vastly improved living conditions. Italy and Hungary are two other nations that have recently tried out large-scale forest planting to reclaim waste lands and prevent erosion of the soil. Our own Forest Service some thirty years ago planted trees in western Nebraska and a green and growing forest, already yielding some timber, now covers thousands of acres of what were formerly barren sandhills. The area is now the Nebraska National Forest.

The Forest Service has made studies of existing wind-break plantings in both Nebraska and Kansas and has found tree windbreaks effective in reducing the velocity of the wind to a distance at least 20 times the height of the trees. The trees have also helped conserve soil moisture, prevent movement of the soil by the winds, and increased crop yields.

